



**TESTIMONY ON HB 181 – Rep. Jopek
House Education Committee
January 15, 2007**

Chairman Jore and members of the committee:

For the record, I am Pete Carparelli, Executive Director of the Montana Quality Education Coalition.

I appear on behalf of MQEC and as a proponent of HB 181 sponsored by Rep. Jopek.

In previous testimony I have shared with you the goals of MQEC and its approach to proposed legislation related to the funding of Montana's public elementary and secondary schools. Although I will not present such a preamble again today, I will submit it as part of my written testimony.

As you know, the goal of the Montana Quality Education Coalition is adequate stable on-going funding for quality public K–12 education as defined in 20-9-309 MCA passed by the Montana Legislature in 2005 and as assured by the Montana Constitution. MQEC will evaluate legislation proposed during the 2007 Legislature, and will support such legislation that adequately addresses one or more of the requirements of 20-9-309 MCA and meets the state's constitutional obligation to adequately fund our public K–12 school system. It will also provide information to assist the Legislative and Executive branches in its considerations of proposed legislation dealing with Montana's public elementary and secondary schools.

MQEC honors the Court's recognition of the legislature's right to phase in any remedy over time, and MQEC will support legislation as part of a phase-in remedy that explicitly prescribes a cost-based approach and leads to a defined funding goal over a specified period of time.

MQEC will oppose legislation that is not consistent with 20-9-309 MCA and the Court's decision.

Today, MQEC supports passage of HB 181, "An Act Providing for Two Additional Pupil-Instruction-Related Days;" because the bill addresses one of the "minimum standards upon which a basic quality education system of free public elementary and secondary schools is built." That is, Rep. Jopek's bill provides an additional way to assure that "qualified and effective teachers or administrators and qualified staff... (are available) to implement the programs" specified in accreditation standards and in statute, and recognized as best professional practice.

Thank you for the opportunity to address you this afternoon. Thank you, Rep. Jopek for bringing this bill to the Legislature.